

## Evaluating the Effectiveness of Different English Language Teaching Strategies in Public Sector Education: A Mixed-Methods Approach

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### Abstract

*This study examines the traditional teaching methods employed in large classes within public sector colleges in Punjab at the intermediate level. Additionally, it proposes alternative approaches and strategies for instructors to manage large English classes effectively. Data was collected using a survey research strategy, employing mixed-method research techniques. Qualitative data were gathered through interviews with English teachers from selected public sector boys' colleges in major cities of Punjab. Quantitative data were collected via a questionnaire with closed-ended items administered to students within the study sample. Three public sector colleges from the target population were randomly selected for data collection. The study utilized six structured interviews with English teachers and received 60 completed questionnaires from intermediate students as data collection tools. To enhance outcomes in large language classes, teachers should concentrate on activity-based teaching, collaborative instruction, and the utilization of group work or interactive approaches. There is a pressing need for government intervention to facilitate the improvement and advancement of public sector colleges.*

**Keywords:** Strategies of teaching Government Colleges language learning.

### Introduction

In this study, the authors seek to shed light on the challenges faced when instructing English language courses to large groups at the intermediate level in public sector colleges located in Lahore. This study delves into the practical context and prevalent issues within overcrowded public sector colleges, aiming to identify the obstacles that teachers encounter in managing large classes effectively, which, in turn, hinder the quality of instruction. Furthermore, the study scrutinizes the traditional teaching methods employed in these large classes and proposes alternative approaches for managing expansive English language classes (Elliott & Timulak, 2015). While numerous scholars recognize the negative impact of large class sizes on teaching and learning, there needs to be more research addressing the unique challenges associated with large English language classes in our public sector colleges. Moreover, there needs to be more studies providing recommendations for improvement. Because of the considerable size of their classes,

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instructors frequently avoid implementing alternative teaching approaches. They are reluctant to reorganize students, fearing potential disruptions to discipline and concerns about time wastage. Additionally, they often need more physical resources. This stagnant situation results from inadequate teacher training and insufficient student engagement. This study parallels a review of the British Higher Education System in the early 1990s (Bulter, 2005).

Incorporating optimal teaching methods in the classroom undeniably positively impacts learners, fostering motivation and supporting achievement in a global context. According to Perry (2003) best practices refer to practical teaching methods, techniques, tips, strategies, exercises, and approaches that yield excellent results in program delivery. Nawab (2012) emphasizes that traditional approaches to teaching English to learners from diverse backgrounds have proven ineffective in Pakistan, primarily due to teachers relying on outdated methods. This study addresses this issue by proposing solutions to pedagogical challenges and advocating the adoption of new techniques and strategies.

Friedman (2005) suggests that to thrive in the 21st century, modern educators require problem-solving skills, creativity, a passion for teaching, a strong work ethic, and ongoing professional development opportunities. This study seeks to investigate and analyze the difficulties faced when teaching English to large classes in public sector colleges in Lahore and propose strategies for addressing these challenges. The insights and experiences of those dealing with these situations will enhance and transform the current educational landscape. Additionally, this research will guide other English language teachers, particularly those working in large classes within public sector colleges, encouraging them to adopt more effective teaching strategies and techniques for improved outcomes (Khajloo, 2013).

## Review of Literature

This section of the research provides an overview of prior research endeavors that have investigated the dimensions and difficulties associated with large classes and the application of diverse teaching approaches. It is important to note that there is no universally accepted definition for what qualifies as a "large class," and perspectives on this issue vary across different educational contexts. For example, Hayes refrains from providing a specific quantitative definition for a large class, acknowledging that perceptions of class size can significantly differ depending on the educational environment. Ward and Jenkins highlight that classes may encompass hundreds of students in certain institutions. Specifically, first-year intermediate level students often feel overwhelmed, intimidated, and surprised when confronted with class sizes of 100 students or more (Tomlinson, 2010). According to Meganathan (2008), large English classes are typically characterized by having between 35 and 100 students. The magnitude of large classes can fluctuate across countries and educational systems; in the United Kingdom, large classes may involve 25-30 learners, while in the United States, they may surpass 35 learners. In developing countries, it is not uncommon to encounter classes with 60 or more students. Nonetheless, the consensus among most English teachers is that a language class with 50-60 students or more is generally considered large enough to pose significant teaching challenges.

Wesche (2012) stated that teaching English in large classes can give rise to a range of issues, broadly categorized as physical, psychological, and technical challenges. Many researchers and writers conclude that large class sizes have a discernible impact on the quality of language instruction and can lead to numerous problems. Nurkamto (2003) stated that the study underscores the significance of the issue, with a substantial percentage (90.29%) of English teachers identifying the large class size as a significant constraint in delivering effective English language instruction.

Additionally, most students (69.75%) concur that the class size hampers their ability to learn the language efficiently. This highlights the consensus among teachers and students about the inhibiting effects of large class sizes on the learning experience. The researcher's perspective on discipline in large classes echoes these concerns. Many teachers express apprehension about the physical constraints imposed by many students confined within limited classroom spaces. These physical limitations can make it challenging to maintain discipline and order, further exacerbating the difficulties associated with large classes (Mishra, 2015).

Teachers in large classes often need help facilitating meaningful teacher-student interaction due to the limited space available to move around freely. In contrast to smaller classes, where teachers can easily navigate and engage with students, in larger classes, they often find themselves confined to one spot, which restricts their ability to interact with students effectively. This limitation can hinder the dynamic classroom exchange of ideas and information (Rachmajanti, 2008). Additionally, teaching in large classes can take a toll on teachers physically and mentally. The sheer size of the class, along with the need to maintain discipline and order, can be physically exhausting. The mental strain arises from concerns about managing disciplinary issues within such a large group of students. Teachers often feel overwhelmed and need help maintaining control over the classroom environment. Excessive noise and disruptions in large classes can further contribute to the loss of concentration among teachers and students, making it challenging to create a conducive learning atmosphere (Pande, 2013).

Many teachers express genuine concerns that they cannot address their students' needs in large classes and need help to provide personalized attention. Xu's study (2001) highlights the psychological aspect of this challenge, where teachers may find it intimidating to face a large crowd of students, especially when they have limited knowledge about their students' backgrounds and expectations. In large classes, students can sometimes become mere faces rather than individuals with unique needs and aspirations. Moreover, managing administrative tasks such as monitoring attendance and checking assignments becomes a constant worry for teachers in large classes. They feel responsible for reviewing all their students' work, and failing to do so can cause concern. However, attempting to do so can also be logistically challenging and may compromise maintaining educational standards. Reviewing the perspectives of various writers and researchers, it becomes evident that the overall situation of teaching English in public sector colleges could be more satisfactory. Xu's study underscores the dissatisfaction among English language teachers and students with the current standard of English language instruction. They point to factors such as ineffective teaching methods, a flawed examination system that promotes rote learning without comprehension, the use of challenging literary texts, and the issue of large class sizes as major impediments to effective teaching and learning of English.

The study's findings indicate that the predominant activity in English classes is teaching literary texts through translations into Urdu. This approach suggests a teacher-centered methodology where the teacher is central in delivering content. As a result, the students often have a passive role in the English class, mainly listening and absorbing information. The study highlights both the positive and negative aspects of teacher-centered teaching. On the positive side, students in such classes can benefit from having a strong language model provided by the teacher, which can enhance their listening skills. However, teacher-centered courses also have their drawbacks. Students in a whole-group setting have limited opportunities to actively practice and engage in speaking or reading activities, which can hinder the development of their speaking and reading skills. Given these limitations, there is a clear need for a shift toward more effective communicative and task-based methods of teaching English. These approaches encourage active

participation, speaking, and interaction among students, which can contribute to a more well-rounded language learning experience (Khan, 2011).

Chug (2016) identifies one of the most significant challenges encountered by large classrooms in developing countries as the adequacy and availability of suitable learning resources and classroom equipment. This encompasses essential items like benches, textbooks, blackboards, chalk, and other materials for teaching and learning. Access to these resources and equipment is associated with an improvement in achievement scores, estimated at around 2-3%. The study underscores the technical dimension of teaching in large classes, emphasizing the importance of teachers being proficient in using microphones and overhead projectors to ensure clear visibility and audibility for students. Nevertheless, a significant limitation is evident in numerous English language institutions in Pakistan, as the lack of audio-visual aids known to enhance language learning can exacerbate the difficulties that teachers encounter in delivering effective instruction to sizable classes.

Malik's (2006) research findings highlight the limited resources and learning opportunities available to Pakistani college students, particularly when learning English, a compulsory subject at the intermediate level. This limitation suggests that students may need help with the necessary educational materials and support for effective language learning. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of adapting teaching methods to be effective within the practical constraints and realities of the Pakistani public sector college system. Within this context, some significant constraints identified in the study are the substantial class sizes in colleges and the relatively low language proficiency of students in English when they enter these classes. These constraints underscore the need for innovative and practical teaching approaches to address these challenges and promote effective English language instruction in such an environment.

### **Study Objectives**

This study aimed to examine and analyze the challenges associated with teaching English to large classes in public sector colleges in Punjab. Additionally, the study sought to identify teaching activities or strategies that could effectively address these challenges.

### **Research Question**

How can teaching strategies be formulated for the instruction of English in sizable classes at the intermediate level within public sector colleges in Punjab?

### **Research Methodology**

The researcher in this study utilized a mixed-method approach. Qualitative data were acquired through interviews with English teachers selected from the participating colleges. Concurrently, quantitative data were collected via closed-ended questionnaires, and the students filled these out. The quantitative data analysis from the closed-ended items in the questionnaires was conducted to derive results. This section delineates the study design and the procedures implemented for data collection. The central aim is to examine the challenges linked to large English language classes and create viable teaching strategies for instructors to mitigate these issues effectively. The study focuses on public sector institutions catering to boys in major cities of Punjab, including Lahore, Gujranwala, and Faisalabad. Boys' colleges are specifically chosen for this research due to the distinct academic environment they provide and the importance of factors like discipline and other potential influencing variables in understanding the teaching and learning dynamics in large classes.

### **Data Collection**

The study employed a survey research strategy to gather information and data. To conduct the research, structured interviews were conducted with 6 English teachers from the three selected public sector colleges representing the target population. A close-ended questionnaire was also administered to 60 students from the same colleges. Specifically, twenty students from each of these colleges participated in the survey, which served as the primary method for collecting data for this research. In the case of the students' questionnaire, a five-point Likert Scale was utilized. This scale allowed students to express their opinions and responses to various statements or questions on a scale of five points, typically ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly. Such scales are commonly used to measure the intensity of agreement or disagreement with statements and are valuable for quantifying responses in survey research.

Questionnaires are valuable tools for collecting standardized and objective information from a significant portion of a group, making them suitable for obtaining quantitative data. In the context of this study, the close-ended questionnaire was designed to yield quantitative information and was administered to students in large classes within the selected colleges. This approach is advantageous for gathering data on a larger scale, as it allows for collecting responses from many participants. In addition to the questionnaire, the study also utilized structured and open-ended interviews with English teachers. Interviews with teachers offer a deeper understanding of their perspectives and insights regarding the challenges and issues associated with large classes. As the researcher has noted, interviews provide a means to delve into interviewees' thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, views, feelings, and perspectives. This qualitative approach complements the quantitative data from the questionnaires, offering a more comprehensive analysis of the problem of handling large classes and the potential solutions from the teachers' standpoint. In this investigation, questionnaires and interviews were instruments to collect precise and dependable information. The researcher formulated a questionnaire for the students within the sample population, while structured interviews were conducted with English teachers selected from the same sample population. These tools were considered suitable for collecting truthful information, considering the perspectives of both students and teachers, which is valuable for a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to large English classes. Following data collection, the researcher transcribed and analyzed the gathered information using statistical methods, likely with software such as Microsoft Excel. This data analysis process allows for identifying trends, patterns, and significant findings within the collected data, contributing to the overall research objectives and helping to draw meaningful conclusions from the study.

### **Study Population**

The study encompassed the entire population of public sector colleges for boys in major cities of Punjab, including Lahore, Gujranwala, and Faisalabad. To ascertain the exact number of colleges to be included, the researcher obtained this information from the office of the Directorate of Public Instructions Colleges in Punjab, specifically located in Lahore. This approach ensures that the study covers all relevant colleges within the specified geographic scope, comprehensively representing the target population.

### **Study Sample**

Participants for this study included English language teachers from two public sector colleges in upper Punjab. The researcher used a purposive sampling approach for data collection, selecting

participants based on specific criteria, notably a minimum of five years of experience in teaching English.

Purposive sampling allows researchers to carefully select participants who meet the study's specific requirements, as Creswell et al. (2007) emphasized. During this research, two interviews were undertaken with teachers affiliated with the English departments of each mentioned college. Moreover, 20 questionnaires were dispensed to students at the intermediate level (grade 11-12) from each college within the sampled population. In sum, six structured interviews with teachers and 60 questionnaires were gathered from intermediate students. The data derived from the teachers' interviews were transcribed and subjected to qualitative analysis. Top of Form This qualitative analysis aims to provide a deeper understanding of the perspectives and insights shared by the participating teachers, contributing to the overall objectives of the study.

## Results and Discussion

This research section involves a comprehensive discussion of the research questions in the context of the data collected from students and teachers in public sector colleges across major cities in Punjab. The goal is to offer a thorough understanding of the utilization of effective teaching strategies for English in large intermediate-level classes, leveraging insights from the analyzed data obtained from teachers' interviews and students' questionnaires. It is essential to align the analyzed data with the research questions to elucidate and contextualize the findings. This alignment allows the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions from the study and provide insights into the effectiveness of teaching strategies in large English classes. By connecting the data to the research questions, the researcher can offer a complete picture of the study's outcomes and implications.

**Table 1: Items to investigate contemporary pedagogical techniques**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Responses to items agree in percentage</b>
How often do you incorporate innovative language activities into your teaching?	70%
What instructional techniques are most commonly used?	70%
Which activities do you employ to enhance the development of learners' writing skills?	60%
Do you strategize activities while taking into account the educational background and proficiency levels of the learners?	90%
Do you believe that antiquated language teaching methods are currently in use?	80%
How familiar are you with Best Practices?	70%
Is it challenging for you to teach a large, multilevel class?	90%
Do you incorporate learner-centered teaching practices into your instructional approach?	30%
Do you employ language activities to improve the proficiency of your learners?	70%
Do you encounter difficulties when implementing a new language teaching technique?	90%

Table 1 reveals several key insights regarding the teaching practices employed by English language teachers in large intermediate-level classes. Although a significant majority of teachers (70%) claim that their teaching methods are modern and innovative, it is noteworthy that the predominant activity employed with English language learners (ELLs) is the traditional question-and-answer approach (70%). This method primarily focuses on enhancing reading comprehension skills in ELLs. However, the prevalence of this traditional method suggests that there may be a reluctance to adopt more innovative approaches. This highlights the need for a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching methods, in line with the principles advocated by Richard et al. (2007), which emphasize teachers' role as learning facilitators.

Furthermore, the use of story writing techniques to develop writing skills is mentioned, which may represent a less integrated approach to language teaching and learning, potentially deviating from best practices. Surprisingly, a significant number of teacher participants (80%) acknowledge using contemporary outdated teaching practices, while only 30% employ learner-centered teaching practices. This indicates a substantial gap between current teaching practices and the more effective approaches recommended in modern language instruction.

Regarding ESL best practices, it is noteworthy that most (90%) of teachers express difficulty in teaching large multilevel classes, and an equal proportion (90%) face challenges when introducing new language concepts. This underscores the importance of teachers accessing research, examples, and innovations to adopt best practices in English teaching and learning. Effective language instructors today are tasked with creating and maintaining an environment conducive to learning based on a wide range of best practices (National Education Technology Plan, 2005 US Department of Education).

### **Effect of Large Classes on Teaching and Learning**

The teacher feedback in the study unmistakably indicates that the considerable class size has pronounced adverse effects on both teaching and learning and the overall classroom atmosphere. Teachers acknowledge that the size of the class negatively influences their teaching and students' learning experiences. The sheer size of the class itself is seen as a hindrance to their learning process. On the other hand, teachers face various disciplinary issues due to the large number of students in the class. Managing such a large group becomes difficult, with considerable time wasted on maintaining discipline and taking roll calls. This leaves teachers with limited opportunities to provide individual attention to students.

Furthermore, the physical limitations of a large class, including difficulty moving around the classroom and the need to speak loudly, can make it challenging for teachers to effectively engage with students seated at the back of the room, hindering their ability to understand and engage with the lecture. Additionally, the study observes that large class sizes can harm students' mental and physical well-being, further impeding their ability to learn. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the challenges of large class sizes to create a more conducive, effective learning environment.

### **Situation of Teaching English in Public-sector Colleges**

The information suggests that English language education in public sector colleges in Lahore is marked by monotony and a need for more engagement. Notably, these colleges predominantly utilize the lecture method as the primary teaching approach throughout the academic year. Their primary objective is to complete the syllabus, resulting in a tedious and ineffective teaching and

learning process for educators and students. Teachers acknowledge their inability to deliver satisfactory academic outcomes, resorting to strict discipline to maintain control in the classroom. Furthermore, these public sector colleges tend to implement disciplinary measures due to the large class sizes, leading to teacher-centered classes where instructors dominate, and students become passive recipients of knowledge. This lack of student participation diminishes motivation and interest in language learning. Notably, the data underscores the absence of audiovisual aids for enhancing teaching effectiveness in public sector colleges, with teachers relying solely on blackboards as their instructional tools for teaching English. The researcher also discovered that many teachers need training to effectively handle and teach such large classes.

Additionally, there is a pressing need for teachers to acquire proficiency in audiovisual aids. To address this issue, it is essential to organize lectures, seminars, and workshops for educators. These events should focus on imparting strategies for managing large classes and harnessing technological tools effectively. Regrettably, the current reality is that these essential practices need to be implemented in the education system.

### **Use of Effective Strategies by English Teachers to Manage a Large Class**

The data indicates that most teachers recognize the importance of engaging their students in the classroom through various activities. These activities encompass discussions, drills, role-playing, asking concise questions, organizing quiz competitions, and forming student groups. Such approaches can significantly enhance students' speaking and reading skills.

The researcher underscores that utilizing a range of tasks in a sizable English class proves to be an effective strategy for involving students with varying skill levels while sustaining their participation. To illustrate this, the researcher provides an example emphasizing introducing variety without establishing distinct tasks. For instance, diversity can be achieved through repetition, where students are tasked with creating outline notes to summarize various texts or sections of the same text. They are then encouraged to utilize these notes to convey what they have read to a partner and subsequently to other peers in the class. At each stage, the partner's questions and suggestions for clarification play a crucial role in helping students refine their oral summaries, ultimately contributing to the development of more substantial written materials. However, in public sector colleges, the primary emphasis is placed on developing listening skills, with reading often reduced to a memorization exercise to cover the syllabus, regardless of whether students truly understand the material. While most teachers admit that teacher-centered classes are predominant in their colleges, they also acknowledge the importance of student-centered teaching approaches.

Teachers express that adopting an extreme stance, whether entirely teacher-centered or solely student-centered, could hinder effective learning in the classroom. They argue for a balanced approach that combines elements of both, allowing students to participate actively in learning while maintaining a teacher's guidance. Some teachers advocate for a preference toward student-centered classes, where activities engage students, allowing teachers to observe their learning behavior and responses. This approach prioritizes interactivity, maintaining a primarily teacher-centered teaching style but incorporating occasional opportunities for students to interact with each other or engage with the teacher in the classroom.

Contrastingly, in an interactive approach, the pivotal role of the teacher diminishes, and students take on a more substantial role in the learning process through active participation. These teaching methods free students from the constraints of a teacher-centered class, enabling them to learn



independently and recognize their abilities. This approach is an innovative alternative to the frequently employed lecture method, especially in large classes.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study underscores the challenges presented by large classes in public sector colleges at the intermediate level in Lahore, with more than 50 students. Classroom management is a major obstacle for teachers, making it difficult to oversee the learning process effectively. In these large ELT classes, teacher-student interaction is limited, and individual attention to students must often be improved. The traditional lecture method alone has proven ineffective for teaching language in such settings.

This study perspective highlights the need to refrain from using any single teaching method, as no one approach is universally applicable. Teachers must adapt their management techniques to meet the needs of learners, considering timing and real-world circumstances. In large classes, it is essential to ensure active student participation in the learning process, reducing their dependency on teachers inside and outside the classroom. The study also shows that a considerable portion of teachers' time is dedicated to addressing discipline issues, limiting opportunities for interactive teaching and student engagement in activities. The lack of technology, including audiovisual aids, in public sector colleges hurts students' motivation for effective learning. English language teachers in public sector colleges should participate in regular training workshops and lectures to enhance their effectiveness within the limitations they face. Researchers have emphasized the necessity of ongoing professional development for teachers and course managers, particularly in handling large classes.

Providing essential classroom equipment and resources is crucial for better teaching outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

This section entails recommendations for enhancing the current situation, coupled with conclusions drawn from the analysis of data and the discussion within this study.

- To tackle the challenges identified in this study, it is recommended that the government consider opening new colleges in response to the expanding city population and focus on enhancing the infrastructure of existing public sector colleges. Additionally, recruiting more trained English language teachers is crucial to alleviating the teaching workload and improving teaching quality. Regular teacher training workshops are essential to equip educators with diverse teaching strategies and methodologies, particularly for managing large classes effectively. English language teachers should actively advocate for a communicative approach through activity-based teaching, fostering student engagement and communication. Top of Form
- These measures aim to enhance the quality of English language education in public sector colleges. Group work can help address student needs and discipline issues. If feasible, providing modern technology tools to public sector colleges can enhance language teaching. Ultimately, teachers must adapt best practices to individual learner needs and stages of development.
- Teachers should prioritize a communicative approach to language teaching in large English language classes, especially by embracing activity-based teaching methods. Promoting extensive communication between students, their peers, and teachers is crucial to enhancing their confidence and language skills. Group work is another strategy that teachers should utilize to address student needs and alleviate challenges associated with discipline, individual

attention, and assessment. Teachers should tailor their strategies and activities to suit the specific circumstances in large language classes, which can be highly beneficial.

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